

## MILLIONS IN DHS RADIOS COLLECTING DUST IN WAREHOUSES

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can't account for radio equipment it already has, much of which is collecting dust on shelves of warehouses, according to a report released today by the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General (IG).<sup>1</sup> The new report found that the department has no reliable way to create an inventory of existing radio systems, and component-level data is often inaccurate and incomplete. The IG report also found that without significant reforms, significant funds could be wasted on current and future radio procurement programs. For example:

- The IG found that Immigration, Customs and Enforcement (ICE) recorded \$6.6 million worth of radio equipment in its inventory as being "in service" when in reality, the items were stored in a warehouse for 17 months.
- Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recorded \$21.5 million worth of equipment as being "active" when it was stored in a maintenance facility for 16 months.

**DHS is not effectively managing utilization of existing equipment across components.** Not surprisingly, without consistent data, DHS can't make the most efficient use of what it has across components. As the IG stated plainly, this places DHS at risk for wasting taxpayer dollars. For example, the \$21.5 million worth of equipment CBP was storing in a warehouse included 840 new portable radios. At the same time in February 2011, the Office of Border Patrol reported a shortage of 893 portable radios in the field. CBP officials said that they were reallocating radios to fix these problems, but as of August of 2012, 5 of the 9 southern CBP sectors were still reporting radio shortages.

In another example, the IG found that the Secret Service and ICE had 85 digital interface units worth \$262,000 that have never been placed into operation. CBP needed 50 of these same units for an upgrade project, which were no longer available from the manufacturer. Secret Service officials stated that they are keeping their units as spares, and ICE's units remained in storage.

**There is no effective governance structure for the radio program across the department.** Last year, the IG issued a report looking at interoperability of radio communications across DHS components, and found that there was no central governing body to set policy and manage radio programs.<sup>2</sup> The IG recommended that DHS establish such a body, but DHS management did not concur with the recommendation, saying that existing offices were sufficient. In the new report, the IG once again highlighted the lack of a central governing body, noting that at present, components are independently managing their radio programs with no formal coordination from the department.

DHS established a joint program office to manage a new acquisition program, TacNet, under CBP, that is supposed to develop a new single network for voice, video and data. As part of the effort, this program office has tried to collect data from each of the components so that it can determine what new equipment needs to be purchased. According to the program office, DHS

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<sup>1</sup> DHS Office of Inspector General, *DHS Needs to Manage Its Radio Communication Program Better*, OIG-13-113, September 2013.

<sup>2</sup> DHS Office of Inspector General, *DHS' Oversight of Interoperable Communications*, OIG-13-06, November 2012.

components routinely ignore requests for data. In addition, this office can only manage the new program; it has no authority over existing radio programs.

**Without better data, and a new management approach, DHS will miss opportunities for cost savings.** DHS estimated that it needs \$3.2 billion to modernize radio systems, and last year, awarded a \$3.2 billion strategic sourcing contract to meet those needs. However, the efficiencies the department hopes to gain in this effort will be difficult to achieve without improved data on what DHS components already have, and most important, better management from the department, steps the IG has recommended DHS take.